

# RESALE HOMES COLLECTIONS

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## Managing moisture levels in your home

(NC) Is the inside of your home starting to feel like a rainforest? Too much moisture doesn't only make things uncomfortable – it can also lead to serious damage to your home and your health.

Signs that there may be too much moisture include condensation on windows, wet stains on walls and ceilings, and musty odours. If you've noticed any of these red flags, read on to find out more about what can happen and what you can do about it.

### NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF TOO MUCH MOISTURE

Too much moisture over time can lead to unfortunate, and sometimes serious, conditions that can be costly to correct, such as:

- Warping wood in floors and furniture
- Peeling paint and stains on walls and ceilings
- Dust mites and mould.

If you own a newly built home, the new home warranty from your builder and backed by Tarion will not cover these types of conditions if they are the result of improper maintenance. This is why you need to take control of the situation.

### GET A SENSE OF THE SEVERITY

The first thing you should do is invest in a hygrometer. A hygrometer is an instrument that is used to measure humidity levels in the air. They are inexpensive and available at many hardware or building supply stores.

Follow the instructions to get the most accurate reading of the humidity level in your home. Generally, you want the indoor humidity level to be between 30 and 50 per cent.

### WAYS TO REDUCE HUMIDITY LEVEL

There are several ways you can reduce your indoor humidity level if it's too high. The best option is to get a dehumidifier. They do exactly what the name implies — remove humidity from the air.

Other actions you can take include:

- Removing items, like heavy curtains or furniture, that are blocking windows
- Using the range hood fan while cooking
- Using the bathroom fan when showering and leaving it on for some time afterwards.

Maintaining proper humidity levels in your home is easy to do, and the benefits are definitely worth it.

Find more home maintenance tips, including a monthly home maintenance checklist, at tarion.com.

www.newscanada.com



By Julien Laurion  
The Big Tuna of Real Estate

Hi Julien. I recently inherited a home from a family member, and I have some money saved to renovate the Master bathroom. A friend sent me a photo of a bathroom with a 'shower beer' fridge built into the wall beside the custom shower with the same tile to match, and it looked slick. I am a beer enthusiast, and I think this would be great! What do you think? Sincerely, IPA4LIFE

**GREETINGS IPA4LIFE!** What a unique idea! Thank you for sending me a photo to see the idea in action.

As a craft beer lover, I personally think it would be a cool way to spice up the bathroom; however, this would not be for everyone. If you are determined to do this, there are some ways to build it – so as not to hurt your resale options.

To ensure you get the look you want with the "built-in" effect, you will need to install an electrical outlet behind the unit. I would have the electrician install two outlets, one near the top of the built-in and the other at the bottom. Once the tile is installed, I would then drill the shelf pin holes in the middle of the built-in.

Why do all this? Well, I am thinking of resale. With this approach to installation, the unique shower beer fridge could either stay or go. If the new owner doesn't like the idea as much as you do they now have a built-in option to turn into a shelf for storage and use of electrical items such as toothbrushes or a hairdryer.

Unique ideas in homes are both a blessing and a curse. They can help your home stand out, but, in most cases, they do not add much in value and can hinder the sale of your home.

IPA4LIFE, I always advise my clients to consider the next buyer.

Cheers!

Julien Laurion AKA Big Tuna is a local Real Estate Sale Representative with Royal LePage Your Community Realty in Aurora. I am a real estate agent who has expertise in both Real Estate and Renovations and has been involved in this community for over 20 years.

If you have a question for my monthly article or if you are considering buying, selling or leasing a home please feel free to call or email me directly at (416) 402-5530 or julien@bigtuna.ca or by alternatively visiting my website www.bigtuna.ca or Facebook page @bigtunarealty



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# Easy ways to transform your *kitchen*

(NC) Whether you're into flipping houses or embarking on small DIY projects, there are many ways to transform your kitchen on budget and on time. Getting started can seem overwhelming, but lifestyle and DIY expert Erin Trafford shares her best advice on how to tackle a kitchen reno.

**SET GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

Renovating can be a daunting task and preparing for demolition day can be equally as overwhelming. Before you start, create a list of projects big and small, and set goals and timelines for each task. Creating a to-do list will help you focus on priorities, such as choosing finishes and organizing trade assistance, while managing your personal tasks at the same time.



**CHOOSE YOUR LAYOUT WISELY**

A small kitchen is a reality in many homes. If you're struggling to decide on the best layout, consider drawing multiple options. Once you have your favourite, tape it out on the kitchen floor to test the functionality of the new design.

**CONSIDER ONE-STOP SHOPPING**

To simplify the renovation process, consider a one-stop shop for products and expertise. Home Hardware Building Centres offer design advice, tools and quality materials to complete your renovation project — big or small — from start to finish.

**SAVE WHERE YOU CAN**

The cost of a kitchen reno can add up quickly, so consider splurging on a few investment pieces and finding ways to save on the rest. Establishing your must-have upgrades, such as appliances, countertops and backsplashes, will help you identify where you want to spend money and where you can cut back. If you're looking for ways to work with what you've got, try painting cabinets or changing out hardware. Refinishing rather than replacing original hardwood flooring can also save you thousands.

**SELECT A TIMELESS PAINT**

Bold looks are great, but they don't stand the test of time. When selecting the theme for your kitchen, choose classic colours that will last more than one season. Match the paint to the overall décor and the



mood you want to set. For a cozy, coastal retreat, try hues of green with greyish undertones. If you want a look that will last for years to come, choose neutrals for a brighter and more modern space.

**ILLUMINATE YOUR KITCHEN**

If your current kitchen isn't already brimming with natural light, try an upgrade. Brighten your home

with warm lighting such as LED recessed lights or an accent pendant over the sink to mimic the feel of natural sunlight.

Find more information on everything you need to complete your reno at [homehardware.ca](http://homehardware.ca).

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# Low-maintenance lawn alternatives

A traditional lawn may not be right for every property nor desired by every homeowner. There is no denying that lawns take time and effort to establish and daily or weekly maintenance to thrive. Homeowners who find that a traditional lawn is not practical can explore some low-maintenance alternatives.

## WILDFLOWER MEADOW

Homeowners with wide swaths of property may discover meadows are cost- and time-efficient. Stores sell special wildflower meadow mixes of seeds, or homeowners can use wildflower plug plants throughout areas where grasses are left to grow longer. This natural area can be a home to wildlife and an idyllic backdrop to a home. Most meadows only require a spring or summer and autumn cut to thrive and look good.

## ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

Partition areas of the property for ornamental grasses to grow. The gardening resource Elemental Green says ornamental grasses tend to be drought-resistant and low-maintenance. They won't need much fertilizer and are often resistant to pests as well. Ornamental grasses grow in tufts or sprays and will not require mowing. However, they are not ideal for areas that get foot traffic.

## MOSS

Moss can thrive in shady areas and ones where the soil tends to stay a bit damp. Moss is velvety soft and green, so it can mimic the look of a traditional lawn but won't require mowing and other upkeep. Because it spreads quickly, moss can take over quite rapidly. You will need to protect areas where you do not want moss by creating barriers to stop the spread.

## GRAVEL

Stone and gravel areas can reduce maintenance in the landscape and require very little upkeep. When gravel is installed correctly, weeds may not grow readily. Gravel installation may include laying heavy-duty, semi-permeable landscape fabric, which is available in home improvement centers. Gravel is cheaper than pavers and can be just as beautiful.



## ARTIFICIAL TURF

If the desired look is a lawn without all the upkeep, there are various artificial grass options on the market. Homeowners who opt for artificial turf can save money and space devoted to lawnmowers and other lawn tools.

The grass may be ideal for some, but there are alternatives for people who have troublesome landscapes or desire a low-maintenance product for their homes.

## Signs of drought stress and what to do about it

A pristine lawn is a source of pride for homeowners. Even the most well-maintained lawns must confront a host of challenges in a given year, and perhaps no challenge is more daunting than drought.

Homeowners may feel helpless when drought strikes and begins to transform their lawns from green sources of pride to off-colour eyesores. However, learning to identify signs of drought stress and what to do about it can help homeowners get their lawns through dry periods.

### SIGNS OF DROUGHT STRESS

The lawn care experts at TruGreen note that there are four common characteristics of drought stress. Perhaps the most noticeable are colour changes, but homeowners must recognize there's a difference between a change in hue and a colour change. When a lawn changes its hue, typically turning from bright green to a dull gray or blue-green colour, it is in what TruGreen identifies as the first stage of drought stress. Regular watering, if it's allowed (local drought restrictions may dictate how much water can be applied to the lawn), can help the grass regain its moisture and the lawn may recover within a couple of days. When lawns change from green to brown, this is indicative that the lawn is in a dormancy stage. At this point, the lawn is entering survival mode. Watering to save the lawn will need to be more extensive. Deep and repeated watering for two to three weeks may help restore the lawn, but some parts ultimately may not recover. And deep watering may not be allowed until drought restrictions are lifted, increasing the likelihood that a significant portion of the lawn turns brown.

Footprints in the lawn are another sign of drought stress TruGreen indicates that this is a result of lawns that are too tired to spring back up after they have been walked on.

Wilting also indicates drought stress is affecting the lawn. Wilting occurs when grass blades roll or fold because they don't have sufficient water content.

### WHAT TO DO ABOUT DROUGHT STRESS

In addition to the watering techniques noted above, homeowners can try other strategies to help their lawns make it through a drought. TruGreen advises against mowing drought-stressed grass and keeping off the lawn as much as possible.

Removing tall weeds is another strategy homeowners can try. Doing so ensures the grass, and not the weeds, gets what little water is available during a drought.

Homeowners also should resist the temptation to mow too close, especially when signs of drought stress are just beginning to appear. TruGreen notes that mowing too close creates a shallow root system that makes lawns more vulnerable to drought. It can be hard to watch a pristine lawn suffer from drought stress. But several strategies can increase the likelihood that lawns survive such conditions.

More information about combatting drought can be found at [www.trugreen.ca](http://www.trugreen.ca).



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# CRAFTSMAN HOME RENOVATION IDEAS

Craftsman homes trace their roots to the late 19th century. An architectural style inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement that flourished in Europe and North America for roughly 40 years between 1880 and 1920, the American Craftsman home has endured into the 21st century thanks to its beauty and the unique feel its homes inspire.

Many craftsman homes were built nearly a century ago, if not even earlier. That means these homes may require some renovations that make them more functional in modern times without sacrificing their historic beauty.

**SIDING:** Craftsman homes are instantly recognizable from the street. Homeowners who want to maintain that authentic craftsman feel must carefully consider their choice of material when replacing the siding on their homes. The siding manufacturer Allura notes that fibre cement siding can be a great option for homeowners who want to replicate the original design of craftsman homes built with sported board-and-batten siding. Fibre cement siding gives the appearance of wood when installed and does not fade quickly or require significant maintenance.

**EXTERIOR COLOUR:** Homeowners need not feel beholden to certain colours when replacing siding or repainting the exteriors of their homes. Nautical colour schemes featuring navy blue exteriors with white accents can highlight features that are unique to craftsman homes, but more understated colours and tones can work just as well.

**PORCHES:** An expansive, welcoming front porch that makes for the perfect place to relax and read when the outdoors beckons is a telltale feature of craftsman homes. Furniture options abound when homeowners are looking to upgrade the living spaces just outside the front door of their craftsman homes. Adirondack chairs can make a porch a relaxing place to enjoy a morning coffee or post-dinner digestif, while wicker furniture can help homeowners establish a relaxing vibe for summer. A porch swing or hammock can make that relaxing vibe resonate even more.

**REAL WOOD CABINETS:** Cabinets are a popular avenue homeowners look to when they want to give their kitchens a new look without breaking the bank. When upgrading cabinets in a craftsman home, the home renovation experts at HGTV note that craftsman-style kitchen cabinets often feature straight lines and minimal ornamentation. Cabinets are typically made from heavy woods like quarter-sawn oak, hickory, cherry, or maple. HGTV notes that updating the cabinets in a craftsman home often requires custom cabinetmakers, so the project may be more expensive than it would be if replacing the cabinets in a different style of home.

Craftsman homes are instantly recognizable, thanks to many of their unique features. There are various ways to renovate craftsman homes yet still maintain their authentic feel.



– Photo by Benjamin Costello from FreemImages



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# Design ideas to give your home a farmhouse feel

Farmhouse-style homes are having a moment. A 2020 survey from Homes.com asked more than 5,000 adults across the United States about their favourite house style from a list that included bohemian craftsman, mid-century modern ranch, French chateau, and Tudor, among others. The modern farmhouse was the runaway winner, as participants in 42 of the 50 states indicated this simple, cozy style was their favourite.

Home renovation projects can help homeowners put their unique stamp on their homes, and such projects can be both aesthetic and functional in nature. The following are some farmhouse design elements homeowners can consider as they look to transform their home interiors with this popular style in mind.

**EXPOSED BEAMS:** Exposed beams instantly evoke images of a farmhouse. The home improvement experts at BobVila.com note that this rustic renovation project can utilize real wood or faux beams that look like the real thing. Decorative beams that have nothing to do with a home's structural integrity can be installed by skilled do-it-yourselfers. However, even faux beams are heavy, and BobVila.com recommends homeowners have an engineer assess their existing structure before installation.

**DISTRESSED WOOD FINISHES:** Distressing is designed to make something look less than perfect. Distressed wood finishes can be found throughout many

farmhouse-style homes. Furniture and picture frames can provide the distressed look farmhouse fans are looking for. This is a relatively inexpensive project that many homeowners can tackle on their own after watching some online tutorials that recommend the right tools and techniques to get the job done right.

**KITCHEN SINK:** Many components combine to create a truly classic farmhouse kitchen. But perhaps no component is more essential than the classic farmhouse sink. The renovation experts at HGTV note that a classic farmhouse sink features a deep, wide basin. Farmhouse sinks are large enough to handle all the dishes that come after a big family meal. Old-fashioned porcelain sinks are worth consideration by homeowners who want their kitchen sinks to evoke a traditional farmhouse feel.

**COUNTERTOPS:** HGTV recommends butcher block countertops for homeowners who favour European farmhouse style. Homeowners overhauling their

kitchens to create a farmhouse feel should consider installing a large island with a walnut butcher block countertop for an authentic farmhouse feel.

Farmhouse-style homes are wildly popular. Some simple renovations can help homeowners with a fondness for farmhouse style bring this classic look into their homes.



## SHOULD I DIY? 3 questions to determine if its best to renovate on your own

A do-it-yourself mentality has taken hold in millions of households across the globe. Popular television channels like HGTV and DIY Network as well as accessible home improvement content on apps like YouTube has inspired many homeowners to tackle renovation projects around their homes. Taking such initiative is admirable, though it also can prove costly if homeowners end up biting off more than they can chew.

Home improvement videos and television shows tend to oversimplify renovation projects, potentially giving homeowners a false sense of confidence in their DIY abilities. A concerted effort on the part of homeowners to determine if it's best to renovate on their own or hire a professional should always be the first step of any renovation project. No two homeowners are the same, but the following three questions can help homeowners determine if DIY is their best option.



### CAN I AFFORD TO DIY?

Professional home improvement projects are costly for a variety of reasons. Materials can be costly, but so are the tools and labour necessary to do the job right. Homeowners may not have the tools necessary to complete complicated projects. Specialty tools can be expensive to purchase or even rent, and the cost of acquiring such tools should be included in any DIY project cost estimates. Labor also factors heavily into professional projects, and for good reason. Talented contractors have unique skills that have been developed and perfected over many years. Those skills can ensure projects are completed quickly and correctly. Labour may seem costly, but such costs may ultimately prove to be a bargain compared to the cost of fixing DIY mistakes. Projects that are minor in scope and don't require the use of potentially costly specialty tools may be better suited for weekend warriors than more complicated renovations.

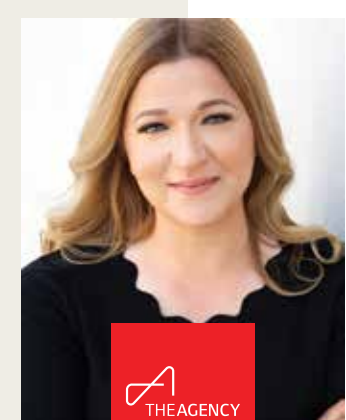
### DO I HAVE THE TIME?

Homeowners must determine how much time they have to complete a project before deciding to do it themselves. No one wants to spend months staring at an unfinished renovation project. Homeowners who are already pressed for time may not be able to complete projects in a timely fashion, which can make homes less comfortable and even less safe.

### CAN I PULL THIS OFF?

DIY projects can instill homeowners with a sense of pride in their homes, but homeowners considering the DIY option must conduct an honest assessment of their skills. A lack of renovation experience does not necessarily mean a homeowner cannot successfully complete a DIY project. But in such instances, it may be best to start with small, straightforward projects and then gradually move up to bigger, more complicated projects, as skills are fine-tuned. And homeowners who have never been at their best with a hammer in hand should not be ashamed to leave the work to the professionals.

Television shows and online tutorials can make renovations appear easier than they actually are. Homeowners considering DIY renovations can ask themselves a handful of questions to determine if they're ready for the challenge of renovating their homes on their own.



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# What to know if you're building a custom home

(NC) Building a custom home is like working with a blank canvas — you have the freedom to design and personalize it however you wish.

It can also be like taking a huge gamble. The contract between you and the person you hire to build your home can potentially break down to the point where construction stops before your home is finished.

This can lead to terrible consequences for you, including financial loss and stress. The best way to protect yourself is to do things right from the beginning. Here are a few important things you can do to ensure your custom home dream becomes a reality:

Make sure your builder is licensed. New home builders in Ontario must be licensed with the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, which ensures builders have the required skills and holds them to professional standards of conduct. This authority manages an online provincial builder directory

that you can use to confirm the builder you're interested in is licensed. Make sure your builder is licensed before you enter into any agreements.

Have a solid contract. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to rely on verbal agreements that can easily fall apart and make it difficult to prove what was agreed on. Make sure everything is in writing. Your contract should clearly state what you're getting, how much it's going to cost and what each person is responsible for. Have a real estate lawyer prepare, or at least review, your written contract before you sign it.

Know how you're protected. Almost all new build homes in Ontario must be enrolled into the province's new home warranty program. As a buyer of a "contract home," the warranty covers you against financial loss if the relationship between you and the builder breaks down before your home has been completed. This protection covers the difference between the amount you paid your builder and the work that has been done to a maximum of \$40,000.

Find more information and resources at [tarion.com](http://tarion.com).

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Quality built bungalow on quiet court backing onto a ravine lot situated in the heart of Oak Ridge's marine. Approx. 2,700 sq ft plus unfinished walkout basement 9 ft ceilings on main with open concept kitchen/ 2 storey family room. 3 full Ensuites w/large walk-in closets. Hardwood floors throughout. Close to Wilcox Lake, parks and hiking trails and all amenities!



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Prestigious Stonehaven. Almost 6,000 Sq Ft of luxurious living space. 6 bedrooms. Open Kit/family room, 9ft ceilings on main. Private south facing lot. Many recent improvements, hardwood floors through main and 2nd floor den, large 2 tier deck!



**PRESTIGIOUS STONEHAVEN HOME WITH FINISHED BASEMENT! \$1,728,000**  
Prestigious Stonehaven Approx. 3,600 Sq Ft plus finished basement with 2 separate recreation rooms, 5 Bedrooms in total and 3 full Ensuites. Hardwood and ceramic throughout main floor. Improvements Include: new roof shingles, 2nd Br Ensuite, two other Ensuites, finished basement!



**PRESTIGIOUS STONEHAVEN HOME ON SOUTH FACING LOT! \$1,665,000**  
Prestigious Stonehaven Approx. 3,800 sq ft 2 Storey Home with stone front, 3 car garage situated on a premium south facing lot, 9 ft ceilings on main floor. 5 total bedrooms, 2 full Ensuites!



**APPROX. 1,100 SQ FT CONDO! \$629,900**  
Spacious 2 bedroom/2 bath condo apartment. Approx. 1100 Sq Ft with 9 Ft ceilings. Newly painted, updated laminate floors, Steps to all amenities including public transit, major shopping centres, Highway 401, Allen Expressway!



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**We're also thrilled to announce that our Phase 2 Woodland Towers is now completely SOLD OUT and our beautiful campus is buzzing with activity. Our Sales Presentation Centre is open, along with our in-house café and patios.**

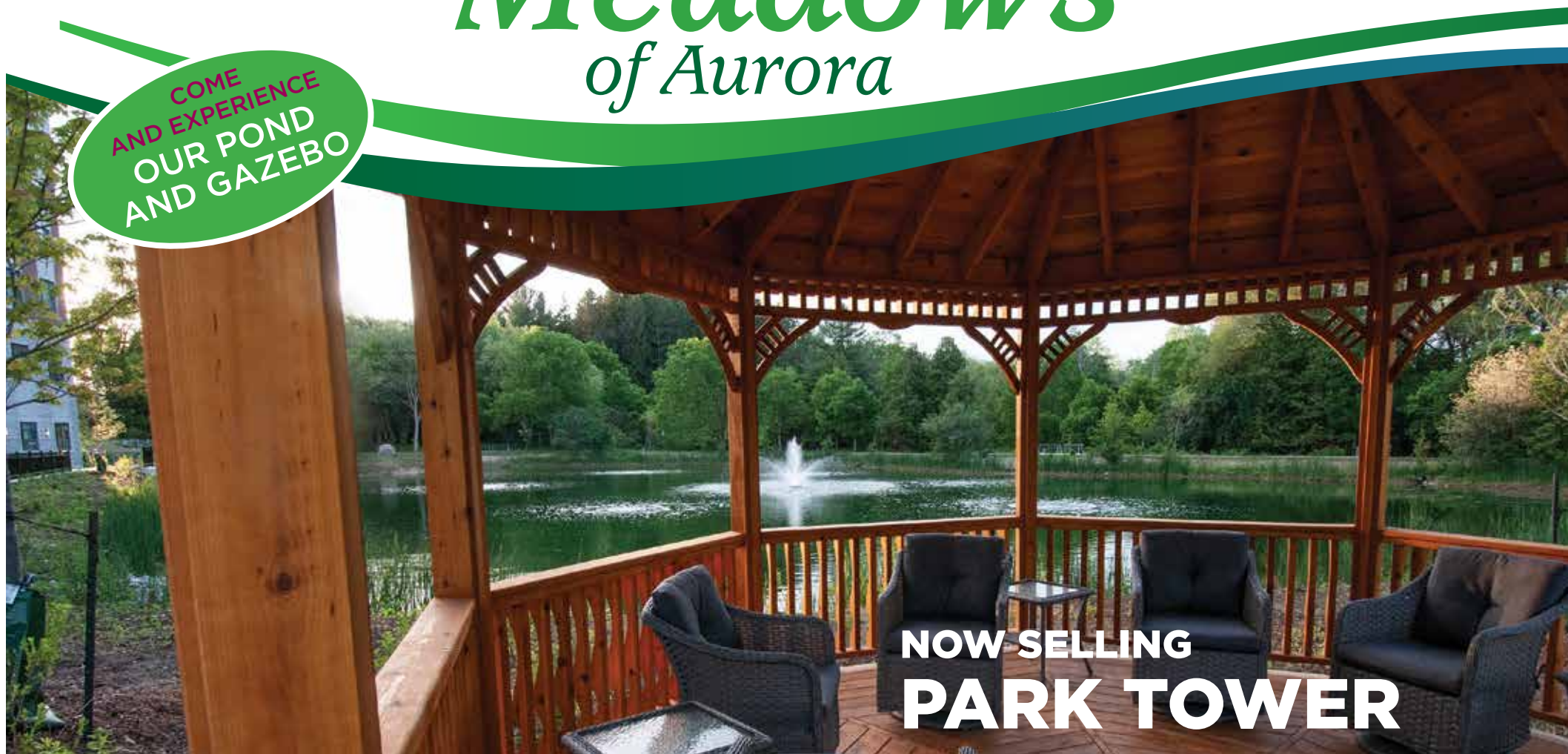
Park Tower features 125 superbly designed residences on 7 floors in a wide and stunning range of design and suite options. The building will be located immediately adjacent and linked to Woodland Towers and is beautifully sited to take full advantage of our amazing park-like setting and complement our green environment.

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## The Meadows of Aurora

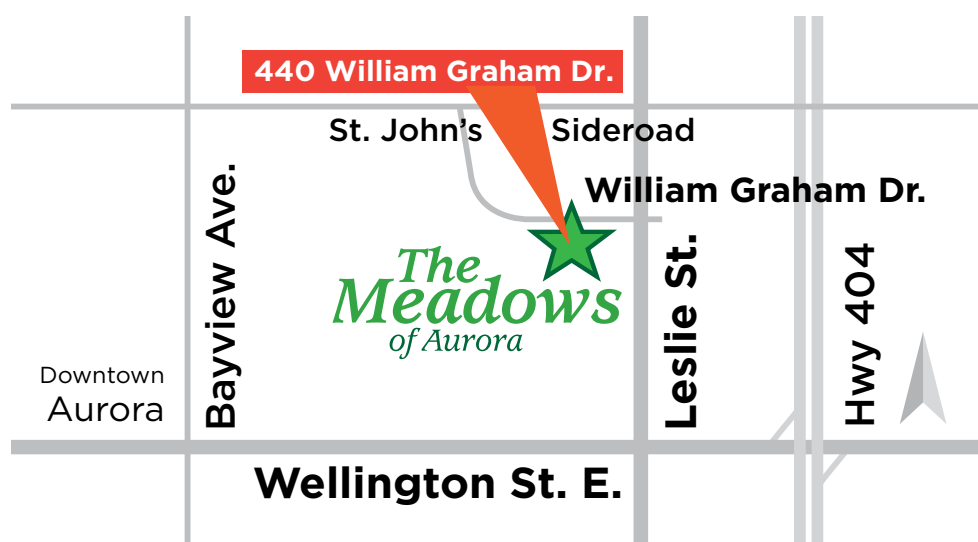
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## 4 ways to use *local strawberries* this summer

(NC) Summer is finally here and so is the best of our growing season. Local produce not only tastes better, it also supports Canadian growers, as well as reduces our carbon footprint. While there are many stars of our local growing season, strawberries are the favourite of many.

The small, unique and deliciously red berries from fields across the country are available for a short window, but pack a punch that keeps us coming back for more each year.

If you find yourself purchasing more strawberries than you know what to do with this summer, here are a few ways to enjoy them:

**TAKE IT OUTDOORS.** Strawberry skewers on the barbecue will be your new party trick. Lightly oil and grill strawberries to top a salad. Or soak them in rum or bourbon or a touch of vanilla extract or balsamic for a non-alcoholic option before skewering and barbecuing for a few minutes, flipping once for a deliciously warm topping for your favourite ice cream or cheesecake.

**S'MORES THE WAY.** For a sweet and tart twist on the summer classic simply add sliced strawberries to your usual s'mores combo or take it to the next level with chocolate hazelnut spread and a few slices of banana, instead of the traditional chocolate combo. Marshmallow-dipped strawberries also make a great fireside companion. Melt marshmallows on the stovetop or use marshmallow fluff and dip a skewered strawberry in the melted marshmallow, roasting to perfection over the fire.

**JAZZ UP YOUR JAM.** Making jam with local berries is a tradition, and while your standard strawberry jam is delicious on its own, why not make a few new variations? Try adding a cup of prosecco to your standard jam recipe for a sparkling surprise or some fresh-chopped basil for a savoury spin on the classic favourite. Spread on a scone or add to a charcuterie board for an extra taste of summer.

**SAVOURY IS THE NEW SWEET.** A summer salad with strawberries — like a spinach salad with pecans and a poppy seed or balsamic vinaigrette — may already be in your repertoire, but there are many more ways to use strawberries in a salad. Mix strawberries and fresh basil, drizzle with a mixture of olive oil, honey and lime juice and serve with grilled President's Choice Halloumi. Strawberries, feta and mint is also a delicious combination and can be used like a salsa with fresh naan.

Local strawberries are now available at Loblaw's stores across Canada.



[www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)



### Reinvent family-favourite meals with local products

(NC) With a growing desire to shop local, there is an easy and convenient way to switch up your grocery list with products that are prepared in Canada. With more brands made locally than you may think, it's easy to shop local from the comfort of your nearest grocery store.

Featuring Canadian-made sauce, meatless meatballs and veggies, this tasty recipe brings excitement to the dinner table.

### *Bank Mi Sandwiches* Prep time: 15 minutes Serves: 4

- 1 cup (250 mL) matchstick carrots
- ½ cup matchstick daikon
- ½ cup matchstick cucumber
- 1 jalapeño pepper, thinly sliced
- ⅔ cup rice wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp white vinegar
- 1 jar VH General Tao Sauce, divided
- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 12 Gardein Meatless Meatballs
- 1 baguette, halved lengthwise and cut into 4 sections crosswise, toasted
- 1/3 cup packed cilantro leaves

**DIRECTIONS:**

- 1** Stir together carrots, daikon, cucumber, jalapeño, rice wine vinegar, white vinegar and 2 tbsp General Tao Sauce. Let stand for 15 minutes.
- 2** Heat oil in large skillet set over medium-high heat. Cook Meatless Meatballs for 5 to 8 minutes or until browned all over. Stir in remaining General Tao Sauce; bring to boil. Cook for 3 to 5 minutes or until meatballs are heated through and well coated in sauce.
- 3** Assemble meatballs in baguette with pickled vegetables and cilantro.

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